

Memorandum to the File  
Case Closure

Alleged Improper Hiring, Misuse of Grant Funds, and False Statements  
VISN 17, Center of Excellence, Waco, Texas  
(2010-03822-IQ-0001)

The VA Office of Inspector General Administrative Investigations Division investigated allegations that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] improperly hired a psychologist, misused grant funds for personal use, and made false statements to acquire a fellowship with the Office of Academic Affiliation. To assess these allegations, we interviewed [REDACTED]

(b) (7)(C)

[REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; and other VA employees. We also reviewed personnel and grant records, as well as applicable Federal laws, regulations and VA policy.

Federal law provides penalties for whoever, in any matter within the jurisdiction of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the U.S. Government, knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact; makes any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation; or makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement. 18 USC § 1001. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch state that employees shall not use public office for private gain; shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any individual; and shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or ethical standards set forth in this part. 5 CFR § 2635.101(b)(7), (8), and (14).

*Allegations Pertaining to Improper Hiring*

[REDACTED] allegedly improperly hired a psychologist. The complainant clarified that the allegation of improper hiring was not that [REDACTED] improperly hired the psychologist but that she "promised" the psychologist a starting salary higher than the entry level for a GS-11. The complainant said that it was a "mistake" on the part of the complainant to make this particular allegation. Personnel records reflected that the psychologist began working for VA on [REDACTED] 2008, as a GS-11, step 1, and that he did not receive a higher than entry level salary.

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[REDACTED] told us that [REDACTED] offered the psychologist a GS-11 post-doctoral fellow position; however, the psychologist told [REDACTED] that he needed a certain salary to accept the position. [REDACTED] said that [REDACTED] then offered the psychologist an opportunity to work on a Texas A&M University (TAMU) grant to subsidize his income. [REDACTED] said that was not an uncommon practice in the scientific field. She said that a scientist would typically work 40 hours a week for VA and also 20 hours a week on a faculty appointment or something similar.

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### *Allegations Pertaining to Misuse of Grant Funds*

██████████ allegedly, several years ago, used grant funds for her own personal use. The complainant said that this information came through hearsay from ██████████ and the complainant could provide no further specific details. ██████████ told us that she "never used a participant payment account for something that was not research-related" and that other participant employees would verify her proper use of the funds. She said that other employees also had account access and withdrew money for research purposes. ██████████ told us that ██████████ never asked her to improperly access a participant payment account and that she was not aware of ██████████ ever misusing any account funds. ██████████ also told us that she had no knowledge of ██████████ misusing grant funds for her own personal use. (b) (7)(C)

### *Allegations Pertaining to False Statements to Obtain a Grant*

██████████ allegedly provided false statements concerning a formal affiliation between VA and TAMU on the application proposal to VA's Office of Academic Affiliation (OAA) to obtain a grant. The OAA Program Announcement, dated January 15, 2009, titled: *VA Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment*, reflected that the submitting facility was required to "...be affiliated with a medical school providing accredited residency training in psychiatry..." and required to provide "...evidence of strong partnership between the VA facility and its academic affiliate...." In addition, these requirements were to be submitted with the proposal package, along with "letters of support" from the affiliated university. (b) (7)(C)

Proposal records contained a letter, dated February 10, 2009, from ██████████ to ██████████ reflecting that ██████████ supported ██████████'s grant proposal and that ██████████ participated in establishing a formal affiliation between VA and TAMU. Records contained another letter, dated February 6, 2009, from ██████████ reflecting that ██████████ supported ██████████ grant proposal. A third letter in the records, dated February 6, 2009, from ██████████ to ██████████ reflecting that ██████████ supported ██████████'s grant proposal. (b) (7)(C)

### Conclusion

We did not substantiate an allegation that ██████████ improperly hired a psychologist. The complainant admitted that it was a mistake to allege improper hiring, and records reflected that the psychologist was hired at the entry level for the position. We also did not substantiate an allegation that ██████████ misused grant funds for personal use. The complainant could provide no detailed information, and ██████████ the employee who supposedly passed on the hearsay information, told us that she had no knowledge of ██████████ misusing grant funds. Further, we did not substantiate an allegation that ██████████ made false statements on an application to ██████████ to obtain grant funds. (b) (7)(C)

Records reflected that [REDACTED] obtained the required affiliate support and submitted it with her grant proposal. These allegations are being closed without a formal report or memorandum.

Prepared By: [REDACTED]

(b) (7)(C)

11/17/2011  
Date

Approved By:

11/17/11  
Date